

Candidate Information

Position:	General Counsel and Director of Legal Services
School/Department:	University Secretary
Reference:	24/111984
Closing Date:	Monday 1 July 2024
Salary:	To secure the highest calibre appointment, an attractive remuneration package, commensurate with the seniority and responsibilities of the role will be provided
Duration:	Permanent

ABOUT QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST:

Since 1845, Queen's University Belfast's staff, students and alumni have made a difference to societies locally, nationally and internationally. Today, Queen's University is one of the UK and Ireland's leading Universities and it continues to shape and serve the world around us through its research and teaching. Over 99% of the Queen's research environment was assessed as world-leading or internationally excellent, with Queen's ranked 198 in the 2023 Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

Queen's University has always been a generator of knowledge; we tackle the issues faced by individuals and societies at a local, regional and global level and are an engine of progress that is central to the socio-economic success of Northern Ireland. When it comes to future graduate employment, Queen's ranks 12th in the UK and our contribution to the economy in Northern Ireland and the UK is currently estimated at over £3 billion annually.

This is a significant moment in the history of Queen's University, and an exciting time to join the Queen's community. The University has recently designed a new leadership structure to optimally align strategy and vision with operational delivery - making us more agile and better equipped to achieve the goals as outlined in our ambitious Strategy 2030.

JOB PURPOSE:

The General Counsel and Director of Legal Services is a new senior University wide role that will have a significant impact in shaping legal services and driving commercialisation in the University. The postholder will lead on providing proactive, timely and well-informed legal advice on corporate matters and law, which impact or may impact on Queen's, including student and staff related matters, employment, property, contracts, and issues associated with commercial activity.

The successful candidate will be responsible for ensuring legal consistency across the University, including the Legal Services, Research Contracts, Information Governance, Risk Management, Employment issues and related roles, through a matrix management structure for specific projects and functional responsibilities. These will include the projects developed under the auspices of Belfast Region City Deal and the University relationship with QUBIS Ltd., the separate spin-out company owned by the University.

They will also lead cross-institutional projects and programmes associated with principal accountabilities. This post is within the Chancellery which is the central coordinating section of the University, and the successful candidate will act as a senior member of the Chancellery leading a team of professional staff.

MAJOR DUTIES:

1. To develop a strategy and framework for best practice in provision of legal advice to support the University in delivering its overarching institutional objectives.
2. To develop and contribute to policy development to support legal compliance, charitable and corporate responsibilities, set limits of legal risk, legal best practice and strategic focus while ensuring compliance with relevant legislation (including those related to information governance) and seeking opportunities for continuous improvement.
3. To lead or collaborate with key stakeholders in the planning of major University-wide projects and initiatives, relating to property, commercial issues, intellectual property, equity Management, research, students, and employment.
4. To provide advice and guidance across the organisation in relation to matters of Legal Services, Information Governance, Risk Management, Research Contracts, and IP commercialisation, monitoring the quality of service and providing guidance on the use of outside counsel to ensure their work is efficient and reflects the goals and values of the University.
5. To provide advice to the President and Vice-Chancellor, University Management Board, and senior managers across the University with regards to legislation, legal risk and obligations and support the drafting, and negotiation of, contracts of substantial value or strategic importance with third parties. This includes commercial agreements, contracts of employment and strategic or academic arrangements.
6. To provide practical, timely, relevant, and accurate solution-orientated legal advice, and interpretation of legal risk, on a wide range of matters, including research support, student matters, property, employment, corporate, spin-out creation, venture capital management, equity management and commercial related matters at all levels across the University, and commission specialist legal advice where required.
7. To support due diligence reviews, including the University's overseas activity and collaborations, by contributing to the development of policies and frameworks to promote best practice and manage the University's risk exposure.
8. To advise on the mitigation of risk and advise on regulatory, compliance, data protection and anti-bribery legislation.
9. To advise on Intellectual Property, and the commercial and contractual arrangements regarding Intellectual Property management, commercialisation, and equity management.
10. To oversee a University-wide review of contractual terms and maintain this portfolio.
11. To ensure the University Management Board are appraised of legal issues, including new legislation which may have an impact on the University's activities and objectives and attend the University Management Board when required.
12. To deliver/facilitate relevant and appropriate training and education to staff, to drive best practice and compliance into this community.
13. To provide advice and guidance in relation to litigation concerning the University.
14. To have oversight of the contracting process within the University and deliver change, where appropriate.
15. To maintain statutory records and submit as appropriate to relevant regulators.
16. To provide leadership that promotes a culture of excellence, innovation, collegiality, continuous improvement and promotes a high-performance culture and demonstrating behaviour consistent with the values of the University.
17. To lead and set the direction of any services which are created or realigned under this role.
18. To actively participate in promoting and maintaining a safe and healthy work environment through adherence to established safety procedures and continuous hazard awareness.
19. Undertake any other duties as may be necessary from time to time in accordance with the needs of the University and the grade of the role.

ESSENTIAL CRITERIA:

The University wishes to appoint an individual of the highest possible calibre to the post of General Counsel and Director of Legal Services who will be responsible for an initial assessment of current capacity, capabilities, and opportunities to develop the service and deliver value.

To successfully fill this challenging role, candidates must have/be able to demonstrate:

1. Be a qualified admitted solicitor or employed barrister (prior to taking up post must be registered, and authorised to currently work in Northern Ireland).
2. Proven track record (including recent experience within the last 3 years) with significant post qualification experience relevant to the role particularly in commercial law, with proven experience of exercising sound, independent judgement on complex legal matters and provision of timely and accurate solution-orientated advice at a senior level.
3. Substantial proven experience to include recent and relevant experience of providing legal advice within a complex and changing statutory, regulatory, and legislative environment, interpreting legislation into practical application and the adaptation of policies and procedures to comply with changing requirements. This must include experience of providing senior commercial legal advice at Board level or experience of already serving as a General Consul or Director of Legal Services or equivalent.
4. Relevant experience of providing significant corporate governance advice to Senior Management or a Board.
5. Proven experience of delivering an effective in-house legal service.
6. Demonstrable understanding of the regulatory and legal framework within the Higher Education sector, intellectual property law, employment law and the challenges and strategic issues facing the sector.
7. Significant recent and relevant experience, with a personal track record of success, as a leader in a significant and complex organisation/ operating environment. Evidence of successful team leadership, encompassing team building and individual professional development with the ability to build, manage and motivate large multi-disciplinary teams with a proven customer focus.
8. Extensive transactional experience of drafting, advising on and negotiating a broad range of complex contracts, including standard and non-standard agreements.
9. Excellent oral and written skills including a well-developed critical and analytical approach to developing documentation.
10. Articulate, confident, able to deal with difficult situations and the ability to negotiate and influence at all levels.
11. Excellent team ethos – demonstrable ability to work on own initiative and as part of a team.
12. Demonstrable commitment to the University's core values.
13. Ability to work flexibly and to respond to the needs of the role that may include at short notice.

DESIRABLE CRITERIA:

1. Experience of working in a relevant sector e.g. with or within either the higher education sector, a research environment, a public sector body or regeneration projects especially on intellectual property issues.
2. Relevant experience of the legal aspects of research governance with or within a public sector setting.
3. In addition to being registered to practice in Northern Ireland, hold certification for either/or GB and Republic of Ireland.
4. Demonstrable understanding of and commitment to QUB's mission, values, vision, and strategic goals.
5. Financial management experience.

Additional Information:

Informal enquiries may be directed to Alistair Finlay, email Alistair.Finlay@qub.ac.uk